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SUBJECT: SERBIAN FM STICKS TO CALLING FOR MORE NEGOTIATIONS

Classified By: Ambassador Alejandro Wolff, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: On December 7, Serbian FM Vuk Jeremic told Ambassador Wolff that Belgrade is happy with the work of the Troika, but criticized what he said were unhelpful U.S. statements during the process about independence for Kosovo. Jeremic said Belgrade wants to continue negotiations with the Kosovars in the belief that if both parties were pushed then agreement would be possible. Ambassador Wolff told an emotional Jeremic that we had reached the end of the road and independence was inevitable. Serbia should deal with this reality in a statesmanlike way and "there should be no more self-inflicted wounds for Serbia." Serbia should not attempt to punish the local population and if it did so the outcome would only be negative for Serbia. End Summary.

¶2. (C) In a meeting with Ambassador Wolff on December 7, FM Jeremic said Belgrade had been happy with the Troika's work, but not with that of Special Envoy Ahtisaari, insisting that the last 120 days of negotiation were not a failure. Jeremic argued that through the Troika process, Belgrade was able to "genuinely talk with the Kosovars for the first time since Milosevic." He suggested that some statements during the Troika process coming out of the U.S. government were unhelpful and that because the Kosovars were told they would be recognized after December 10, they felt that they only needed to "run down the clock."

¶3. (C) Jeremic stated that Prime Minister Kostunica would represent Belgrade in the December 19 Security Council session. He said Serbia is ready to continue engaging in a status dialogue and "suing for peace" and that if Belgrade and the Kosovars were pushed to "really negotiate" then agreement would be possible. Jeremic claimed that radical elements in Serbia were hoping for a Kosovar declaration of independence, which he said Belgrade considers "illegal and illegitimate." Jeremic speculated a declaration of independence before January 20 could result in the election of Radical Party candidate Nikolic. Jeremic also warned a UDI would "result in a frozen conflict and would damage reconciliation and the economy in the region."

¶4. (C) Ambassador Wolff responded that the U.S. understood it was difficult for Serbia's leaders to give up Kosovo, but Serbia's integration into Euro-Atlantic institutions depended on it. However, we had reached the end of the road on the Kosovo issue. Serbia should deal with this in a statesmanlike way and not try to punish the local population as this would only result Serbia's clear disadvantage. Wolff emphasized that the U.S. wants to build up its bilateral relationship with Serbia, which is much broader than just Kosovo. Wolff concluded that he hoped there would be "no more bad Serbian decisions in the offing" and "no more self-inflicted wounds for Serbia. After a long pause during which Jeremic hid his face in his hands, the FM acknowledged

the message and the meeting concluded.
Khalilzad